Re-Rolling 35mm Film To Use
In a Kodak 1935 "Bantam" Camera
(Yes - You Can)

Going through some of my fathers WWII stuff, I found a little Kodak "Bantam" camera that he used for taking "snap-shots" of the places he was sent to for service in the U. S. Army. I wanted to use it, and not have it just sitting on a shelf collecting dust. When I opened the back of the camera there was a label stating that the camera used "828 film". This film was the same exact size as 35mm film, only the sprockets were different. 35mm film any photographers know – Uh! With the exception of the newer digital people - has two rows of sprocket holes on the edges of the film. The 828 film has sprockets as well - these are different in that the spacing is aligned to position the frame of each exposure. The film, when advanced to the next place, a little spring loaded "pin" will stop the film at printed exposure numbers that are viewed in a little round red "window" on the rear of the camera's body.

I first went to "***https://www.butkus.org/chinon/***" - because the camera did not have instructions or users guide for it. (Even the simplest cameras should have correct instructions.) And I found just what I needed. (*By The Way - If you have not looked over this very useful and informative website I suggest that you do just that. I have downloaded many instructions for most of the manufactured cameras that I have from this site. Oh! Yeah - one more thing. When you do download material from this website, please make a donation to this guy. That way it shall be available to any and all needing great information when needed.*) After that, I went to e-Bay and looked for 828 film. It is still out there, however, I do not think that the film contained is much good for making photographs. That was not my intent - I needed two things from buying the films. One was the spools. I did have one spool that was in the camera, but I needed more to re-roll the fresh 35mm film on to. And the second reason was that I needed the "Backing Paper".

I found what I needed - and it was (I think) a little costly. I bought four rolls of 828-Kodacolor film for $40 dollars. However, I knew that if I was very careful in re-rolling the film with the backing paper this would last me quite a while. So that was that. Because I buy my 35mm film on 100 foot rolls, I could get a lot of working fresh film at a reduced cost. And the fact that I would only use B&W film in this camera I would develop myself with chemicals I make (more savings to be had). 828 Film will total eight exposures and are numbered as such on the backing paper.

Have You Given a Thought to Re-Roll 35mm Film / With Backing Paper - On some 828 Spools and Use?

Loaded and ready to Go

After getting the film delivered I opened the boxes and took the film roll out of the foil wrapper, and separated the film from the backing paper. This MUST be done very carefully as NOT to tare the paper, but I left the tape which held the film to the backing paper. That way I could feel where to place the 35mm film to the paper in a correct place. Then I counter-rolled the paper back on the spool to relax the curling of the paper. (Also I used an iron on low temp to flatten the paper.) Then, with a "yardstick", I measured out the correct length of Kodacolor film that was on the spool. It came to be a total of 17 inches. However - To assure a collect foolproof length of usable film I gave it ½" more on the ends. Making the total length of 18".

After Removing the Film From the Backing Paper
Measure and Cut a Scrap Length of Wood to Use in The Darkroom
So to Get the Correct Length to Re-Roll on The Take-up Spool.

Lay Out The Film Spools With Backing Paper Attached to The "EXPOSED SPOOL"
In the TOTAL Dark - Place The Correct, Measured, Length of 35mm Film On the Film Line
(I cut about 1/2" MORE on Both Ends to Assure correct placement.

All of this film attachment procedure MUST be done in Total Darkness. So - Practice is needed to get some "mussel memory" involved. First with your eyes open, then a few more times with your eyes closed. I suggest doing this about 10 to 20 times to get a "feel" for the work ahead of you. (Plus - do NOT get the emulsion side confused. The emulsion side MUST be to the Inside of the camera Facing the Lens.)

When I first did the re-rolling process I really felt that it would be good to have a third hand, however, this of course is not possible. So I had to find a way with using both hands, and keep the film in place on alignment with the backing paper. First attached the backing paper to the spool - and not with tape - just roll it on and keep the edges of the paper on the sides of the spool. This takes great care as not to tear the paper on the edges of the spool. This I do in normal light, by placing the tapered part into the larger slot of the spool spindle. Carefully but tightly begin to roll the paper onto the spool, and stop just before the number 8. Lay everything out on a table or counter in an order that can be felt in the darkness. The 35mm film is contained in a “bulk film loader”. This keeps the 100, or so, feet of film from being exposed to the light.

The items needed are:

The 828 spool with backing paper attached on the EXPOSED end on the spool.
The bulk film loader - with 35mm 400 ASA (ISO) film.
A small scissors.
A roll of clear tape in a holder.
About 6 inch square piece of aluminum foil.

My darkroom is the guest bathroom. I set up a folding “TV-Table” and sit on the toilet. I make sure that the There is NO LIGHT that could “sneak in” at the bottom of the door, by placing a towel at that point. I lay out things in the exact same order as I have with the light on. But before turning off the light, I study what is laid out before me on the table. Sometimes in the past I have reached out and touched each of the things in the order of what I will be doing in the complete darkness, with my eyes closed, then open - and again closed. This way I know just where things are when I need them.

Turn off the lights.
But wait for a few moments for your eyes to adjust to the darkness.

First check for any light leaks, particularly of that space under the door. There MUST be No Light at all during this procedure.

Next - Take the bulk loader and open it. With your forefinger and thumb, find the end of the film, and pull out 18" of film - holding the 17" stick of wood on the BACK side of the film - Not the emulsion side. After stretching the film out over the stick, cut about ½" more from the bulk roll. I lay the film in my lap emulsion side down. Close up the bulk loader.

Next - take in one hand the backing paper, and in the other hand invert the film to where the emulsion is away from the paper. Feel for the old taped “Film Start” point on the paper, and take a small bit of clear tape and place it on the film. Again, feel for the film start point and apply the tape to the backing paper.

Now - with both hands on the film with the backing paper, and keeping it taught, go to the spool end at a little over the number 8 exposure point, and begin to roll the film and backing paper together on the spool. Making sure that it is inline and tight on the spool. Do NOT tape this end.

Next - Keep rolling the film and paper onto the spool, stopping every now and again to “tug” it all together. You will come to the taped film end - at the beginning area. You may feel a small buckling of the film from the paper. With a finger, carefully loosen the tape from the paper, and let it hang there. Carefully roll more on to the spool - the taped end will move about 1/4" this is normal, and is why I suggested the addition of ½" more on both ends. Keep rolling till you feel the end of the tapered backing paper. Now you have completed the re-rolling process. Keep that light off – Now, feel for that aluminum foil and roll the loaded 35mm film spool in the foil. This will not only keep out light, it will hold the film from coming loose on the spool.

Here are a few of the test exposures I made with re-rolled 35mm film on a 828 spool:

Because of the sprockets, I like to crop these out. To me they are annoying and a distraction. Fine of you want that. I feel it looks like crap.

Well! That's about it. What I am really concerned about it that at some point, the backing paper will deteriorate to the point of not being usable. I have given this thought and feel that either I use some of the newly developed backing "paper" from 120 film rolls cut to fit 35mm film. I would have to re-number the places where each exposure comes into alignment and not cascade together. OR make my own from a material by DuPont Chemical called "TYVEK". This stuff is not paper. It is a thin very strong plastic, and it comes in different colors, even black. You might know of this stuff if you have held a National Park Topographic Map.... Sort of a "slick" feel to it, and almost indestructible.

This re-rolling can also be done to Kodak "Instamatic" cartridges to use in the old very popular cameras of the 1960's. And you can still buy flash-cubes as well. In fact, one may do this with any film - or for that matter photo print paper. I a previous article I wrote about rolling photo paper on to a 120 spool to use in a medium format camera. I used a Minolta "Autocoid" twin reflex camera to do that. And it worked well.

Remember - doing things that a few people would laugh at, because they were told it could not be done, does not mean that it can not be done. If you feel that you would like to do anything "odd" - then find a way to do it. That is - if you are not afraid of a challenge. All it takes is an effort, reading, and knowing what you might be up against. You might surprise yourself in what you can do by not paying much attention to other who have not tried doing anything.

Thank you for reading this article. I hope that you may have found it of interest.

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